

**THE CONTEXT OF MARIAN MEDIATION IN THE LIGHT OF
*LUMEN GENTIUM***

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Abstract

*God is a Mystery. However, in Christ, the Incarnate Word, we have come to know God. The truth about the Incarnation, that Christ became human, taking up human flesh in the womb of Mary, is the mirror through which Christian faith is explained. This Biblically grounded truth forms the basis for our communion with God and our Christian faith. In light of this, this paper insists that the truth of the role of the Mother of God is only possible through the lens of the truth about the Son of God for whom she is the Mother and in relation to the Church that he founded for us as the universal means of salvation. It demonstrates how this relationship is the framework for her maternal mediation in the Church. Our study, done contextually and analytically, leads us to conclude that the best place to situate the theology of Mary is within the theology of Christ and his Church as indeed Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* does. Such an approach provides greater depth, context, and clarity to Marian mediation.*

Keywords: Mariology, Christ, Mary, Church, *Lumen Gentium*, Mediation.

1. Introduction

Through the centuries, the Church has articulated in depth, almost as much as in spread, the teaching of Mary, springing forth as it were from Tradition that is itself backed by Biblical warrants. Though this approach to Mariology has not been entirely free from controversies, it has nonetheless proven to be the most practical approach. Nonetheless, we must note that there is no easy route to the development of a doctrine on Mary. There is usually the tension, at least as perceived by some scholars, of having to say too much about Mary on the one hand, or to say too little, on the other. While none of these two extreme positions is

free of error, they tell us a lot about the difficulty of Mariology and the tensions that can arise therefrom.

In the following discussion, we attempt to show the fallacies in both approaches to Mariology while examining also the merits of each argument. For our context, we look at the Mariology of the Second Vatican Council. A lot has been said about what the Council said and did not say (or maybe refused to say?) about Mariology since it was more concerned with ecumenism than with doctrinal proposition or development, more occupied with pastoral concerns than it was with making dogmatic statements or settling doctrinal disputes.¹ However, this does not mean that, at Vatican II and, subsequently with its end, a lid has been placed on the discussion on the place of Mary in the Church and the context of the Marian character or mediation for humankind. Such an assertion would not only be false but also grossly misleading. Contemporary theologians and scholars still seek ways to understand this dimension of the life of the Church better and to make it more intelligible to the modern human by employing a language that is at once acceptable and true. Our present effort is, in a way, an attempt in this direction.

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¹ Robert De Mattei gives a detailed account of the battles on the Mariology of the Council that aimed at pacifying both the minimalists and the maximalists without wounding ecumenical efforts. Cf. Robert De MATTEI, *The Second Vatican Council: An Unwritten Story*, trans. by Patrick T. Brannan et al, English EPUB edition, Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2013. Another author who gives an analysis of the happenings during the Council as regards the teaching on Mary is Ralph WILTGEN in his book, *The Inside Story of Vatican II: A Firsthand Account of the Council's Inner Workings*, Charlotte, North Carolina: Tan Books, 2014. In this book, we find an interesting narrative of how the schema on Mariology was developed and how it eventually came to be a part of *Lumen Gentium* rather than a distinct document, which was the initial intention of some of the Council Fathers.

2. Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* And Mary's Role In The Church

Mary as Mother in the Mystery of Christ

The Church has always recognized Mary as the Mother of Christ and acknowledged her as such. There has never been any controversy about this. Following from this first premise as Mother of Christ, the Church, aware of the truth of the divinity of Christ as Son of God, has always known and honoured Mary as the Mother of God. This Jesus Christ is the same in substance and essence (Greek: ὁμοούσιος, *homoousios*), and equal in power with the Father and the Holy Spirit, though distinct from each (Greek: ὑπόστασις, *hypostasis* – the underlying state or underlying substance that makes each member of the same species unique). This latter teaching, though having a great force through the centuries, was not without controversies. The controversy of Nestorius in which he argued against the divinity of Christ as God (and therefore against Mary, being Mother of Christ, as Mother of God), which was eventually settled in the Council of Ephesus in 431, is the clearest example of this disagreement. Therefore, it is clear that the dispute over the acceptance of Mary as Mother of God was hinged, not on the person of Mary, but on a difficulty in understanding what constituted the real nature and person of Jesus Christ, her Son. The resolution of this rested on the theology of the Incarnation and the mode of the relations between the divine and human elements of Christ, on the nature of the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ at the Incarnation.²

Consequently, Vatican II, armed with the teachings from the previous Councils, reaffirmed Mary as the Mother of God because she participated in his mystery from the beginning, even before the Annunciation. Nevertheless, the Council limited the development of the teaching on Mary to the fact of the conception of Jesus and his taking up of the human flesh and nature from Mary. In this way, they explicitly project Mary as the Mother of God who became human while remaining

² For a detailed examination of the anthropological and theological dimensions of the humanity and divinity of Christ and their implications for Mariology based on the Church Fathers, see Jaroslav PELIKAN, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 55-65.

God, losing nothing of his divinity.³ In light of this, *Lumen Gentium* presents Mary as Mother always in light of her participation in the mystery of her Son and the salvific mystery insofar as, and to the extent that, it draws attention to the central figure of Christ. For Mary McKenna, Mariology is largely, “an attempt to understand the incarnation, its meaning and implications for Jesus, Mary and the Church.”⁴ Hence, the study of Mary should be linked inseparably “not just with ecclesiology but also to the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology, and through Christ to soteriology and eschatology.”⁵ Thomas Norris explores this Trinitarian dimension of Mariology, insisting that it is always at the service of the clarification and illumination of the Mysteries of the Trinity and Christ.⁶ The implication here is that Mariology is always in relation to God. Ipso facto, no theology of Mary is ever construed in terms of being an ‘end’ in itself; instead, true Mariology as the theological reflection on Mary always has as its ultimate aim the communication of the mysteries of God. Mariology, as it were, always “serves to put to flesh and blood on the

³ Cf. *Lumen Gentium* (henceforth *LG*), 55-56, 61. [All quotations from *Lumen Gentium* and all other Magisterial Documents used in this work are from the official Vatican website]. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, explains the mystery of the Incarnation as *Becoming*. For him, Christ did not just assume the human nature, but actually became human. However, the nature of his “becoming” is unique. He becomes something new without losing his old nature. In this way, the Incarnational becoming is understood as a mixed relation, i.e. one ‘becomes’ something else, not by a change, division, separation nor confusion, but by an addition of that which he takes up. This union in Christ is a perfect one in which he is simultaneously God and human. For a more detailed explanation of how Aquinas explains the mode of unity of the human and divine natures in Christ and how this “becoming” is conceived as mixed relation, see THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, QQ. 1-3.

⁴ Mary McKenna, “New directions in Mariology within theology: Mary, Mother of God, Theotokos, type of the Church, illuminator of the fullness of Christian faith and theology,” *Theology*, (2016, Vol. 119, Issue 3), 185–192.

⁵ McKenna, “New directions in Mariology ...,” 189.

⁶ Cf. Thomas Norris, “Mariology: A Key to the Faith,” *Irish Theological Quarterly*, (1989, 01, Vol. 55, Issue 3), 193-205.

mystery of Christ” and guarantees “the presence of Christological substance.”⁷

Mary as Mother in the Mystery of the Church

The role of Mary in the mystery of the Church is directly linked with, and flows from, her understanding as the Mother in the mystery of Christ. This is at the heart of the teaching of the Church on Mary that was reaffirmed at Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*. This document spends a considerable length (nos. 60-65) reflecting on the role of Mary in the Church. The Council Fathers recognize that Mariology can only become fruitful if there is a renewed reflection on the relationship between Mary and the Church that her Son founded. Mary is the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so she reflects a distinct mode of relationship with the Church, different from all other members of his Church. However, this distinct and unique place of Mary in the Church does not separate her from the Church nor make her superior to the Church. Mary is not “a kind of ‘extra-Christian’ child of Paradise”, as Edward Schillebeeckx warns.⁸ Instead, her role as Mother in the Church is premised not only on her role as Mother of Christ but also on the reality of her mission in the Church as a model for her members. John Elbert also agrees with this point.⁹

In no. 61, the document reflects on how her motherhood in the Church is hinged on the mystery of the Incarnation during which, accepting the mandate of the Father to be the mother of his Son, she cooperated with this plan in obedience, thereby becoming for us a model of obedience and also “our mother in the order of grace.” Later, reechoing the words of the Council Fathers in *Lumen Gentium*, Pope John Paul II, writes of this “obedience of faith” as that which is at the foundation of her merits

⁷ NORRIS, “Mariology ...,” 203.

⁸ Edward SCHILLEBEECKX, *Mary Mother of the Redemption: The Religious Bases of the Mystery of Mary*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 69.

⁹ John ELBERT, “Mary and the Church,” *Marian Studies* (1958, Vol. 9, Art. 6), 22-30.

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and motherhood among Christians.¹⁰ By her obedience and collaboration in the work of Christ, Mary becomes, for the Church, a model of the mission of her Son, the mission of bringing the men and women of the world to the knowledge of Christ and his redeeming grace. It is true that Mary did not receive directly the mission that was given to the apostles, but she was given a different mission.¹¹ Her faith journey with Christ and her unique relationship as his Mother was a vocation even higher in degree and deeper in meaning than that of the Apostles.

Even before Pope John Paul II's 1987 Encyclical, Pope Paul VI – less than a decade after the conclusion of the Council – had already mirrored how the mission of Mary in the Church, derived from her collaboration with her Son in his redemptive work, had always been reflected in the Liturgy. Drawing inspiration from the liturgical life of the early Church, Paul VI acknowledges that the Church had always revered Mary in the Liturgy right from her early years.¹² This Marian veneration in the Liturgy comes from the early Church's tradition and is done within an atmosphere of "truth and with an ever watchful nobility of expression."¹³ John Paul II, drawing heavily from what Vatican II had already explained in *Lumen Gentium*, explained that the veneration of Mary in the Church and the study of Mary in relation to the Church deepens the faith and makes for a better understanding of the mystery of the Church.¹⁴

Indeed, the mystery of the Word made flesh enables us to glimpse the mystery of the divine motherhood of Mary. In the same way, a contemplation of the Mother of God brings us to a more profound understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation since this mystery took

¹⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Mater* (henceforth *RM*), Encyclical Letter, On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church (25 March 1987), 13.

¹¹ Cf. *RM*, 26.

¹² Cf. PAUL VI, *Marialis Cultus* (henceforth *MC*), Apostolic Exhortation, For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, (2 February 1974), 11.

¹³ *MC*, 15.

¹⁴ Cf. *RM*, 30.

place in her womb. Each, to the extent that they do, illumines the other. Therefore, if these preceding theses are correct, it follows logically that we can say the same for the mystery of the Church and Mary's role in the work of salvation. As Mother of the Incarnate Lord, the Founder of the Church, the universal Sacrament of salvation and the sign of Christ's presence in the world, Mary is an important figure in the Church.

Mary as Figure and Exemplar of the Church

Closely linked with Mary's role as Mother of the Church is her title as "figure" and "exemplar" of the Church. *Lumen Gentium*, taking a cue from St. Ambrose, describes Mary as a *typus* (a figure) of the Church.¹⁵ As Virgin and Mother, Mary prefigures what the Church, in her fullness and uniqueness, is: Virgin and Mother. Thus, what Mary is, the Church is also. By the example of her life and the power of her mission, Mary shines forth as the perfect exemplar of the life and mission of the Church in the world. She holds an eminent position in the Church, second only to her Son, the sole Mediator between God and humanity (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6).¹⁶ Mary's relationship with the Church is linked with, flows from, and is constantly sustained by, her relationship with Christ. In this way, she is considered, "as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity" and is honoured in the Church as "a most beloved mother."¹⁷ Here, the Council Fathers point, in some way, to an idea that had always been at the heart of authentic ecclesiology. The Church models herself after Christ her Founder, and is the sacrament of salvation only in Christ. Paragraph 64, for example, expresses the nature of the response of the Church in light of Mary who is her type and exemplar. She also looks up to Mary for the ability to become in a perfect way what she is called to be. Through the example of Mary, she becomes like her in responding to the will of God.¹⁸ There is a parallel: like Mary who is subordinate to, and depends entirely on Christ, the Church must always remain subordinate to – and dependent on – Christ if she must remain true to her identity and fulfill

¹⁵ Cf. *LG*, 63-64.

¹⁶ Cf. *LG*, 54.

¹⁷ Cf. *LG*, 53.

¹⁸ Cf. *LG*, 64.

the mission that flows from this identity.¹⁹ Since Mary is a “type” of the Church, she is also an example of moral and virtuous living.²⁰ Her example leads the members of Christ’s Body, the Church, to come to her Son, thereby shaping the Church’s apostolic activity. She leads them to reach forward to Christ, the one Mediator with the Father and the Founder of the Church.

3. The Mediation of Mary and Ecumenical Considerations²¹

Mary’s Mediation in Two Main Strands of Thought

In the years leading up to the Council, two camps dominated the debates on Mariology and contributed to the teaching on Mary that emerged from the Council. Both Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole and Joseph Ratzinger, who attended the Council as a young *Peritus*, have written extensively on the debates on the schema on Mary, especially as regards the title of Mary as *Co-Redemptrix*.²² The first group, the ‘Christo-centric’ (or Christo-typical’ as some other commentators call it), were insistent on an emphasis on the relationship of Mary to Christ as more important, thereby arguing that the traditional title of *Mater Dei* (Mother of God) be retained. The second group, the ‘Ecclesio-centric’ (or ecclesio-typical), insisted on the title of *Mater Ecclesiae* (Mother of the Church). Both approaches, Soujeole argues, are correct, though he seems to think of the second as more problematic. His argument is that because of her “unique relationship to Christ”, Mary is superior and preeminent in the community of believers. However, he quickly notes that this does not mean that Mary is above the Church or superior to her. Therefore, the

¹⁹ Cf. *LG*, 1.

²⁰ Cf. *LG*, 65.

²¹ Antonio Aranda has provided a beautiful analysis of the maternal mediation of Mary in ecumenical dialogue. Cf. Antonio ARANDA, *Madre, mediodora, maestra. Escritos de mariología*, (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S.A, 2021), 177-205.

²² Benoît-Dominique De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, Ed. by Matthew LAMB and Matthew LEVERING, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37-54. See also, Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, in Hans Von BALTHASAR and Joseph RATZINGER, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 21-23.

tendency towards *Mater Ecclesiae* risks, “honoring [sic] only the aspect of superiority, while overshadowing Mary’s ecclesiality.”²³ This tension split the Council Fathers. It also had a great deal of importance and bearing on the decision on whether to have a separate document on Mary or to incorporate any teaching on Mary within the framework of the teaching on the Church.

However risky the second (ecclesio-typical) approach may seem, as Soujeole and Ratzinger fear,²⁴ it is important to underscore that it could as well fit in neatly as an instrument in explaining the place of Mary as a type and figure of the Church. In this way, we can sustain our initial thesis that all that Mary is in the life of the Church is to be understood in light of what she is in the life of Christ and flows from the privileges granted her as the first and preeminent member of the Church. This is not to say that this relationship with the Church is not prone to misunderstanding. Soujeole recalls how the Council Fathers had wrestled with this tension so much so that there was the debate as to whether Mary should be called ‘Mother of the Church’ or simply ‘Mother in the Church’.²⁵ To be sure, these two levels of motherhood are not the same; they are radically different. Soujeole acknowledges the problem each of these positions can pose:

If one says “Mother of the Church,” then Mary precedes the Church; if one says “Mother in the Church,” then Mary is with the Church. All of this engages an ecclesiology. If she is the Mother of the members of the Church, can one say that she is the Mother of the ecclesial institutions? Certainly not.²⁶

²³ Cf. De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” 47.

²⁴ Cf. De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” 47. See also Joseph RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 151: “The fact that later the two fell apart, that Mary was portrayed as an individual showered with privileges and thereby infinitely removed from us, while the Church was seen as being non-personal and merely institutional, damaged both Mariology and ecclesiology in equal measure.” See too, Joseph RATZINGER, in *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 25.

²⁵ Cf. De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” 47.

²⁶ De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” 49.

In the end, however, the Council Fathers voted in favour of retaining the title, ‘Mother of the Church’, in the document. The title, ‘Mother in the Church’, was considered not appropriate and adequate to explain Mary’s motherhood. In fact, Soujeole recalls that Pope Paul VI, in the speech that closed the third session of the Council, “proclaimed Mary to be the Mother of the Church, which received ovations from nearly all of the fathers.”²⁷ It is clear from this is that while the title ‘Mother of the Church’ was a great step in assuaging the demands of the Ecclesio-centric proponents, it also incorporated the teaching on Mary as Mother of God since she is Mother of the Church because she was first, and foremost, Mother of God. The inclusion of the teaching on Mary within the teaching on the Church was an essential step in the ecumenical dialogue that helped to show that the mediation of Mary did not detract from, nor do injury, to the unique mediation and redemption of Christ.

There is One Mediator between God and Humanity

Number 60 of *Lumen Gentium* begins with what we may consider the building blocks for what the next six paragraphs of the document would say about Mary. Here, the Fathers re-echo a timeless truth of revelation, quoting from St. Paul’s First Letter to Timothy 2:5, that Christ is the sole Mediator between God and humanity.²⁸ This statement alone is enough to diffuse certain tensions. No one can contest the validity of this truth, and so all that the document contains about the nature of Mary’s mediation is in light of this basic truth. Christ is the unique Author of salvation. Salvation flows from his person as God in union with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Together as the Godhead, and united in nature and power, the Holy Trinity, in Christ, effects the fruits of salvation in humankind. The Blessed Trinity needed no other mediation outside of that of Christ. This truth is at the centre of the creedal formula of the Christian faith. That Christ died, rose again and will return for judgment is at the foundation of our belief as Christian people, redeemed for God. Christ’s mediation flows from his being and the merits of his lone-sacrifice on the Cross. He is the sole Redeemer and Saviour of the world,

²⁷ De La SOUJEOLE, O.P., “The Universal Call to Holiness,” 49. Paul VI’s Address can be found here: <https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965.index.html>

²⁸ *LG*, 60.

“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29). No magisterial document of the Church before, during or after the Second Vatican Council has denied this truth nor taught anything contrary to it. Mary’s mediation has never been presented in any known Church teaching in a way that does injury to the uniqueness of Christ’s mediation. Perhaps individual theologians of the Church, though generous in their ideas and buoyed up by an authentic spirit of piety and devotion, have magnified Marian theology, but official Church teaching has always been clear that Christ, the Founder of the Church, is the sole Redeemer, Saviour, and Mediator between God and humanity.

The truth of Christ’s sole mediation is not, and cannot be, contestable. It is an absolute truth of the faith. Any attempt that runs contrary to the affirmation of this truth of the faith is a radical contradiction of the faith of the Church. Any theological endeavour, no matter how generous in intent, that proposes an action of salvation or redemption in which the unique mediation of Christ is sidelined, refuted, or diminished, is false theology. The fullness of the truth of revelation and the completeness of the means of salvation is in Christ alone. Christ is the Word of God present at “the beginning with God” (Jn. 1:2). No one can enter into communion with the Father except through Christ (cf. Jn. 14:6). It is this same Christ in whom, “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9). He is the one “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14), the one through whom “[God was pleased] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross” (Col. 1:20). This Christ, the Eternal Word of God, is the source and means of our salvation, for it is in his name alone that we can be saved (cf. Acts 4:12). The perfection of our redemption is communicated to us in the particular history of salvation in Christ, which became necessary after the wounding of our nature through original sin. Only in Christ, the Incarnate *Logos* do we find the highest ontological fulfillment of human reality and the most penetrative realization of the human universal salvation.

Mary’s Mediation as Co-redemptor or Cooperator in Redemption?

Paragraph 60 of *Lumen Gentium* states: “Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of *Advocate*, *Auxiliatrix*, *Adjutrix*,

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and *Mediatrix*.²⁹ However, it adds immediately that these titles of Mary do not detract from or add “anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.”³⁰ Attempts by some of the Bishops who attended the Council to push for a formal definition of Mary’s role in the work of redemption and the clamour for the definition of a fifth Marian dogma with the title of Mary as *Co-Redemptrix*, were unsuccessful. Such an attempt would have been misconstrued as making Mary an “equal contributor” in Christ’s work of redemption, “rather than one who contributes to the redemption subordinately and dependently, by participation, in a way to be described through the language of analogy.”³¹ Though some theologians do not seem to have a problem with the use of the term inasmuch as there is a preservation of its theological content that expresses the truth of the unique redemptive action of Christ,³² the Council Fathers – or at least some of them – had their reservations. Therefore, despite the pressure from a handful of them, and the willingness of some theologians to use the term in the description of Mary’s mediation in the work of redemption, they preferred to remain silent, omitting the term altogether. The reason was simple: to leave room for further debates and possible theological development. To this day, no official magisterial teaching has used the term, but none has condemned it either.³³

Another reason for the silence of *Lumen Gentium* on this issue was that, as the Council had already noted, it was never its intention to present “a complete doctrine on Mary” or “to decide those questions which the

²⁹ *LG*, 62. The words in italics do not appear thus in the original text, but are used here for the sake of emphasis.

³⁰ *LG*, 62.

³¹ Aidan NICHOLS, *There Is No Rose: The Mariology of the Catholic Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 80-81. In this work, Nichols has written extensively on the pros and cons of the Co-Redemption logic and the historical development of the theme through the centuries leading up to, and after, the Second Vatican Council. Cf. 67-88.

³² Cf. Antonio ARANDA, *Madre, mediodora, maestra*, 189.

³³ Even Pope Saint John Paul II, one of the greatest popes with a deep Marian devotion and persuasion, never used the term ‘Co-Redemptrix’ in describing the mediation of Mary. All other Popes have followed this pattern.

work of theologians has not yet fully clarified.”³⁴ The *Co-Redemptrix* title and the debate on Mary’s mediation as a Co-Redemption could have been the most obvious one in the minds of the Council Fathers. As we have already clarified, they did not condemn outright this proposition but instead allowed it for further theological study and inquiry. In fact, in the statement that follows that which we just cited, the Fathers opened up the topic for discussion with a somewhat subtle word of encouragement. They called for preservation of the opinions, which are subjects of reflection and study in Catholic schools, about Mary as one who “occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us.”³⁵ In this way, the Council Fathers drew attention to the fact that this ought to be approached with a lot of caution if the ecumenical efforts of the Church were to become fruitful in the years after the Council.

Mary’s mediation is a cooperation with Christ in his unique work of redemption. It is ‘cooperation’ because it does not flow from her; rather, it is ultimately linked to, and inseparable from, that of Christ. However, it is not on an equal footing with his. It “rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it.”³⁶ The mediation of Mary is not above that of Christ, not aside it, not against it, not without it, and not substituting for it. It flows directly from that of Christ. Her mediation is not new. It is instead a mediation in Christ, from Christ, with Christ, and, most importantly, under Christ. Though her mediation, by sheer divine will, is necessary, it is not primary. The primary mediation is that of Christ. This mediation fosters always a turn towards Christ, never detracting from Christ and his unique place in Redemption and the Church.

Vatican II, following the example of the Church Fathers, greatly employed the use of the philosophical categories of ‘participation’ and ‘analogy’ to express the theology of Mary. The Council Fathers adopted ‘participation’ as a key term in explaining the mediation of Mary, insisting that she shares in the unique and unrepeatable mediation of

³⁴ Cf. *LG*, 54.

³⁵ *LG*, 54.

³⁶ *LG*, 60.

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Christ, thereby affirming simultaneously the unrivaled place of Christ as Redeemer while leaving room also for Mary's cooperation in his work and mission even in the Church today. Though Christ has already won salvation for humankind definitively, the appropriation of the effects of this once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is still done today through the Church, but also through the mediation of Mary.³⁷ It is true that Christ's mediation is ontological and therefore indispensable by its own power, but the mediation of Mary is necessary even if only derived from, and dependent on, that of Christ. Following Aristotelian categories, we may say then that while Mary is neither the material nor efficient cause of salvation, we may consider her the instrumental cause since it is through her that the Author of salvation came into the world.

Pope Francis clarified, in his Weekly General Audience of 24 March 2021, that in Mary we have a Mother, "to whom Christ entrusted us, all of us; but as a Mother, *not as a goddess, not as co-redeemer: as Mother.*"³⁸ Indeed, nothing true we say about Mary is capable of subtracting from, or rivaling, Christ's sole Redemptive work. As the Pope insists, "Christ is the Mediator; Christ is the bridge that we cross to turn to the Father. He is the only Redeemer: there are no co-redeemers with Christ. He is the only one. He is the Mediator par excellence."³⁹ In this way, the unique mediation of Christ sheds light on the role of Mary in the Church. This teaching is in keeping with the mind and spirit of *Lumen Gentium*. Already, the document had noted that though "no creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer", we all cooperate, in varying degrees, in the unique mediation of Christ.⁴⁰ It is like repeating what St. Paul had already stated, that by suffering, he [and, by extension, all who share in the suffering of Christ] is making up for "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church" (Col. 1:24). Indeed, "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold

³⁷ Cf. Antonio ARANDA, *Madre, mediodora, maestra*, 205.

³⁸ cf. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/247025/pope-francis-jesus-entrusted-mary-to-us-as-a-mother-not-as-coredeemer>. Retrieved 13 Nov. 2022. We deliberately write some of the words in italics for emphasis.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *LG*, 62.

cooperation which is but a participation in this one source.”⁴¹ This participated mediation is what can be explored in a theologically profound way, and it is indeed the groundwork for all other forms of mediation in salvation history: through the Church in the Word and Sacraments, the saints in their intercession, and even in our prayers for one another. “Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire a meaning and value only from Christ’s own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his.”⁴² If, at the basic level, this is true of all of us who share in the common Priesthood of Christ, how much more for she who is Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Aranda also shares this opinion.⁴³

Later magisterial teachings – after Vatican II – devoted to Mary would strengthen this true role of Mary and warn against excesses in devotion to Mary.⁴⁴ Less than ten years after the Council ended, Pope Paul VI would recall how the Council had strongly condemned the exaggerated content and forms of Mariology that rather diminished the person and mission of Mary rather than showcase it.⁴⁵ Such an approach is clearly faulty. In the end, the goal of Mariology is always to lead Christians to glorify God and conform to His will.⁴⁶

4. Conclusion

A greater awareness of the place of Mary in the Church and a theological attempt at interpreting her relationship with the Church in light of her relationship with Christ has been one of the fruits of Vatican II. This orientation itself is not novel, but the direction in which it has been

⁴¹ *LG*, 62.

⁴² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter, On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, (07 December 1990), 5.

⁴³ Cf. Antonio ARANDA, *Madre, mediodora, maestra*, 203-204.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Christi Matri* (Paul VI - 15 September 1966), *Signum Magnum* (Paul VI - 13 May 1967), *Marialis Cultus* (Paul VI - 2 February 1974), *Redemptoris Mater* (John Paul II – 25 March 1987), *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (John Paul II - 16 October 2002).

⁴⁵ *MC*, 38.

⁴⁶ *MC*, 39.

modeled after Vatican II has been somewhat different from those of the centuries before it. Though there are still debates about the proper place for a theology of Mary, it is our submission that Mariology cannot be seen to oscillate between Christology on the one hand and Ecclesiology on the other. Such an approach would bring along with it some problems. If Mariology is studied only within the context of Christology, there is the danger of diminishing the Marian dimension of the Church as Ratzinger has warned. On the other hand, if approached solely from the background of Ecclesiology, there is the tendency to abandon, or at best pay insufficient attention to, the role of Mary as Mother and disciple of Christ. Both extremes run counterproductive to true Mariology. Mariology is a part of, and is enriched by, both. It is not just an appendix to either strand enrich of thought. Mariology is deepened by, and in turn illumines, eschatology, theological anthropology, missiology, pastoral theology, moral theology, and indeed all aspects of the life of the Church. Thus, the best path is to integrate it as it were into the theology of Christ and the theology of the Church, while preserving it within its level of thought and thus opening it up for dialogue with the other aspects of the Church's life. Besides, the best devotions to Mary are those that are directed ultimately, completely, and intimately to Christ. Any Marian devotion that draws the attention away from Christ and the Holy Trinity is not only false, but also does injury to the person of Mary. True devotion to Mary always consists in *Ad Iesum Per Mariam* (To Jesus through Mary).